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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

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Miniature academic communities within the larger university have attempted to reduce the stresses inherent in the separation of academic values and the residential social life of a large campus. These unique living-learning communities provide an alternative to the mass education typical of large universities (1). They emphasize the individual's concerns, both academic and social. The overall approach in education is toward study in depth rather than survey, toward problem solving rather than questions and answers, and toward the discovery of information rather than the conveyance of it. The intent is to maximally involve the student in his own education and to enlist his peer culture to facilitate this.

The present study proposed that members of a living-learning community would be more liberal in their attitudes toward society, and would probably prefer intellectual and social development orientations more frequently than the traditional academic, collegiate and vocational orientations. A greater percentage of students adhering to hippie and activist philosophies was also anticipated, since the community was less structured and allowed more direct participation in the decision making process of the community.

The experimental group was composed of 50 males and 50 females (mostly freshmen and sophomores) in a special living-learning community at the University of Massachusetts. An equivalent number of control subjects was drawn from the large introductory psychology course. The Attitude Inventory, Student Preference Schedule and Philosophy of Life measures were administered to both groups.

The intent of the Attitude Inventory was to discover and measure student opinion toward traditional American values and certain societal institutions. It was composed of 24 statements. Subjects were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed (8). A factor analysis yielded four factors which were attitudes toward the use of drugs, toward sex, of conformity and of the silent majority. The third and fourth factors were distinguished by degree of conformity; the latter seemed to indicate a more profound and pervasive subservience to systems of control. In rank order, the five questions with the highest loadings on the first factor querried attitudes toward prohibitions against LSD, prohibitions against other drugs, abiding by laws you don't agree with, prohibitions against marijuana, and the morality of extra-maritial relations. The five questions with the highest loadings for the second factor which was concerned with attitudes toward sex examined opinions regarding the morality of pre-maritial sexual relations, abortion, and relations between consenting homosexuals; prohibitions against marijuana; and the belief that hard work will always pay off. The third factor was comprised of questions regarding conformity in matters of clothing and personal grooming and for career advancement, the power and authority of the police, prohibitions against marijuana, and whether the student wanted the same things for himself as his parents wanted when they were his own age. The questions with the highest loadings on the fourth factor, which was labeled attitudes of the silent majority, in rank order were: society needs some legally based authority in order to prevent chaos; compromise is essential for progress; hard work will always pay off; depending on how much strength and character a person has, he can pretty well control what happens to him; and the power and authority of the police.

Students bring to college a variety of orientations, that is, preconceived conceptions of the function of a college education or experience which are ex-

hibited in certain behavior patterns that become operative in the college environment (1,2,5,6,7). The Student Preference Schedule which was composed of ninety possible benviors which a college student might engage in is a factor analyzed scale of behavior preferences. These were vocational, instrumental collegiate, intellectual, consummatory collegiate, social development, ritualistic, academic, and fraternity and sorority role orientations. The vocational orientation represents a desire to acquire skills or obtain information which would aid in finding a future occupation. The instrumental collegiate orientation represents a desire to actively participate in extracurricular activities; those who preferred it are oriented toward their collegiate culture. In contrast, the consummatory collegiate orientation which represents an orientation toward both social activity and social inactivity emphasizes the role of a follower rather than a leader. The intellectual orientation represents an interest in art and ideas outside the context of a formal classroom setting; whereas, the academic orientation represents the student whose main interest is the acquisition of knowledge within the formal classroom setting. The social development orientation represents a concern with developing the self through meeting and helping people. The ritualistic orientation represents students who are still more oriented toward their homes than to their college or university. The fraternity and sorority orientation represents active participation in the Greek system on campus. Subjects registered their preferences for specific behaviors on a six point scale from strongly like to strongly dislike (5).

The Philosophy of Life measure (3,4) was composed of descriptive statements of five possible personal philosophies. They were hippie, introspective-intellectual, vocational, collegiate and activist. The hippie philosophy expresses withdrawal from the larger society, inferences to drug use, and being uninhibited and undisciplined. The introspective-intellectual philosophy is concerned with personal growth and development through self-discipline, thought and study. The

vocational philosophy stresses the utilitarian function of a college education in providing the qualifications for a good job. Students who adopt the collegiate philosophy are concerned primarily with pleasurable social interaction. The activist philosophy emphasizes intellectual and social experiences which will assist in achieving some political or social awareness that will be instrumental in affecting change within the society. Subjects were asked to rank order the philosophies according to the degree to which each coincided with his own.

The independent variables were sex (male-female) and sample (community-control). An Analysis of Variance (2 x 2 factorial design) was done on the eight dependent variables of the Student Preference Schedule and the four dependent variables of the Attitude Inventory. The Philosophy of Life measure was analyzed on the basis of the raw frequencies and the percentages of first preference responses.

Differences at .001 levels of significance were obtained which indicated that participants in the special living-learning community expressed more permissive attitudes toward drugs and sex and were more negative toward any type of conforming behavior than the control. Females were significantly less liberal in their attitudes toward drugs and sex than males; these differences were at .05 levels of significance. The control group significantly preferred the more traditional role orientations; these were vocational, instrumental collegiate and greek. Differences were at the .005, .001 and .005 levels of significance respectively. However, there were no significant differences in preference for the consummatory collegiate orientation. It would seem that the experimental group, though unwilling to participate in the manufacturing of a collegiate culture which is inferred from a preference for the instrumental collegiate orientation, are as willing as the control to enjoy it. Females of both groups preferred the vocational and social development orientations significantly more

than their male counterparts. This sex difference was obtained at the .05 level of significance. It would seem to reflect a more traditional overall orientation among college women. Perhaps due to less concern with traditional female vocations, which are social developmental in nature, females in the experimental group scored lower in social development than the control females. However, males in the experimental group significantly preferred this orientation in comparison to control males. This sample-sex interaction was significant at the .05 level. Females also preferred the ritualistic orientation more frequently than males; this difference was at the .01 level of significance. Sex differences in preference for vocational, social development and ritualistic role orientations concur with previous findings with the use of the Student Preference Schedule (5). There were no significant differences found for the academic orientation; however, the experimental group significantly preferred the intellectual orientation, which might be a reflection of the community's emphasis on humanities-arts activities. This difference was significant at the .001 level.

The Philosophy of Life measure indicated that the experimental group, in rank order, chose the hippie philosophy first (38.5%); the introspective-intellectual (34.5%); activist (11%); vocational (10%); and collegiate (6%). The order for the control group was introspective-intellectual (32.5%); hippie (24.5%); vocational (23%); collegiate (11.5%); and activist (7.5%). The results seem to corroborate the less traditional orientations and more liberal attitudes expressed by the experimental group, in that they definitely preferred the hippie philosophy more and the vocational philosophy less than the control group. Although the first preference for the activist philosophy was small (9%), the experimental group as expected was higher than the control (11% vs. 7%).

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One of the more interesting findings was that 73% of the experimental group chose the hippie phiosophy or the introspective-intellectual philosophy first and also 57% of the control group chose these philosophies over the more traditional vocational and collegiate philosophies. This seems to suggest that there exists a large number of students on college campuses who are searching for self definition either through emotional and/or cognitive means. These students are often reacting to the real or perceived depersonalization of university life and searching for unique styles of life that would be more satisfying.

In conclusion, the participants in the special living-learning environment seem to be less traditional in their attitudes toward society, and in their role orientations and philosophies with regard to their life experiences than students in the rest of the university. This study was conducted some time after the inception of the living-learning community and even first year participants had approximately five months experience in this situation. However, there was no data available for any of the subjects prior to their participation in the living-learning community. Consequently the differences between experimental and control groups illucidated above may be an artifact of a self-selection process as well as a product of the living-learning environment. Research in progress which is designed to isolate the influence of both factors does suggest the operation of the self-selection process somewhat. However, the results of this study viewed as a whole seems to indicate the existence of a surprisingly large number of students who are searching for self definition in what they perceive to be an alien environment.

A Table of Percentages of First

Preference Responses for each Philosophy

	Hippie	Introspective-Intellectual	Vocational	Collegiate	Activist
Experimental Male	40	34	8	4	14
Experimental Female	37	35.2	11.1	7.4	9.3
Control Male	24.1	37.9	20.7	8.6	8.6
Control Female	25	27.4	25	15.5	7.1
Experimental	38.5	34.5	10	6	11
Control	24.5	32.5	23	11.5	7.5
Total	30.5	33	17.5	10	9

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